



Eric J. Holcomb
Governor
Kristina M. Box, MD, FACOG
State Health Commissioner

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Dec. 12, 2022

CONTACT:
media@isdh.in.gov

HEALTH OFFICIALS ENCOURAGE HOOSIERS TO GET VACCINATED AGAINST FLU AMID RISING CASES, HOSPITALIZATIONS

INDIANAPOLIS — Indiana health and hospital officials are encouraging eligible Hoosiers to get vaccinated against influenza (flu) as soon as possible, as high levels of transmission are significantly impacting hospitals across the state.

As of the week ending Dec. 3, Indiana has recorded 24 influenza deaths this season. In addition, the state's first pediatric flu death of the season was recorded last week and will be reflected on the flu report posted on Dec. 16. No additional information about the patient will be released due to privacy laws.

"Like many states, Indiana is experiencing very high levels of flu activity right now," said State Health Commissioner Kris Box, M.D., FACOG. "With the upcoming holidays, travel and family gatherings, it is more important than ever to protect yourself and those around you from this highly contagious respiratory infection. This year's flu vaccine continues to be a good match for the circulating strains, and it is your best protection against a severe, and possibly tragic, outcome."

With many respiratory illnesses currently circulating, including flu, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and COVID-19, Indiana hospitals are experiencing significant patient caseloads, said Indiana Hospital Association President Brian Tabor.

"Hospitalizations are currently trending above last year's levels, and at this pace, Indiana could meet or exceed the record levels of inpatient capacity we saw during the peak of COVID-19," Tabor said. "As of this week, inpatient volume jumped 15 percent, with numbers surpassing 11,000."

Tabor and Box urged Hoosiers to seek routine testing for respiratory illnesses or care for mild symptoms through urgent care centers or a family physician's office rather than through an emergency department whenever possible.

"Our hospitals are dealing with the triple impact of influenza, RSV and COVID-19 right now, along with normal emergencies and illnesses, and we want to keep emergency rooms clear for Hoosiers who urgently need them," Box said.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone age 6 months and older get a flu vaccine each year. Because infants younger than 6 months can't be vaccinated, it's important that anyone in a household where a young baby lives or visits get a flu shot to protect the child. Healthcare workers are urged to get a flu vaccine to reduce their risk of transmitting illness to their patients.

It takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies, which protect against flu, to develop in the body. The flu vaccine can be administered at the same time as the new COVID-19 booster, which protects against two strains of COVID-19, including new subvariants, Box said.

Influenza is a viral infection of the respiratory tract. It is spread by respiratory droplets released when infected people cough or sneeze nearby or when people touch surfaces or objects contaminated with those infectious respiratory droplets. People can also become infected by touching surfaces or objects contaminated with flu viruses and then touching their eyes, mouth, or nose. Individuals can be infectious two days before symptoms first appear.

Although anyone can get the flu, some people are at higher risk of flu-related complications, such as pneumonia, hospitalization, and death. Those most at risk for complications from flu include pregnant women, young children (especially those too young to get vaccinated), people with chronic illnesses, people who are immunocompromised, and the elderly. It is especially important for these individuals to be vaccinated each year.

Common signs and symptoms of the flu include:

- fever of 100° Fahrenheit or greater
- headache
- fatigue
- cough
- muscle aches
- sore throat
- runny or stuffy nose

People can help prevent the spread of flu by washing their hands frequently and thoroughly, avoiding touching their eyes, nose and mouth with their hands, and staying home when sick. Hoosiers should practice the "Three Cs" to help prevent the spread of flu and other infectious diseases:

- **Clean:** Properly wash your hands frequently with warm, soapy water.
- **Cover:** Cover your cough and sneeze with your arm or a disposable tissue.
- **Contain:** Stay home from school or work when you are sick to keep your germs from spreading.

To learn more about influenza or to view the IDOH weekly flu report, which is updated each Friday, go to <https://www.in.gov/isdh/22104.htm>. IDOH also has an [influenza dashboard](#) that is updated each Friday with the weekly flu report. The dashboard showcases Indiana's flu surveillance activity on a weekly basis. Historical flu surveillance data, along with county- and regional-level data, are available, along with breakdowns by age group for the current week.

Visit the Indiana Department of Health at www.health.in.gov for important health and safety information, or follow us on Twitter at [@StateHealthIN](https://twitter.com/StateHealthIN) and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/StateHealthIN.

###